

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 are pending. Claims 1-17 and 19-24 are under consideration. Claim 15 has been amended. Support for the amendment to claim 15 may be found in the claims as originally filed. Claims 25 and 26 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. This amendment is believed to place the application in condition for allowance, and entry therefore is respectfully requested. In the alternative, entry of this amendment is requested as placing the application in better condition for appeal by, at least, reducing the number of issues outstanding. Further reconsideration is requested based on the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Response to Arguments:

The Applicants appreciate the consideration given to their arguments. The Applicants, however, are disappointed that their arguments were not found to be persuasive. Further reconsideration is thus requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102:

Claim 15 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Nishijama et al. US 5,253,303 (hereinafter "Nishijama"). The rejection is traversed to the extent it would apply to the claims as amended.

Claim 15 depends from claim 11, which was allowed, and adds further distinguishing elements. Claim 15 is submitted to be allowable as well. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim 15 is earnestly solicited.

Allowable Subject Matter:

The Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the allowance of claims 1-14, 16, 17, and 19-24. Claim 15 has been amended to depend from claim 11, and is thus believed to be allowable as well, as discussed above.

Conclusion:

Accordingly, in view of the reasons given above, it is submitted that all of claims 1-24 are allowable over the cited references. There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Serial No. 09/577,340

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

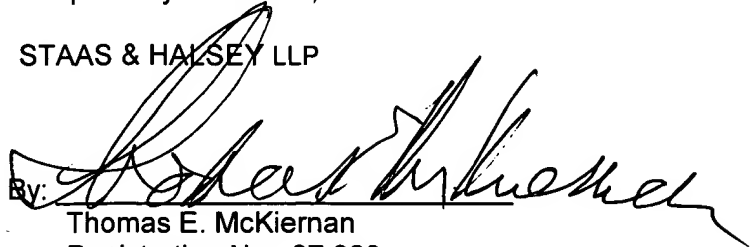
Respectfully submitted,

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26 APR 06

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